

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 560

By Bass

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize the founders, leaders, and participants of the Diana Singing upon the celebration of the event's fortieth anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly pause to pay tribute to those time-honored traditions that serve to promote community unity and to preserve church customs for the citizens of this great State; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy event is the Diana Singing at the Diana Church of Christ, a tradition that has for forty years united individuals from Tennessee and from states across the nation for an all-night congregational singing; and

WHEREAS, the history of this laudable celebration dates back to July of 1969, just after a gospel meeting had taken place in Diana, for which Brother William Sanders of Diana led the singing, and Brother Tom Holland, then of Henderson, preached; and

WHEREAS, during the event, the two pastors commented on an all-night quartet that was being held at the Ryman Auditorium, which led Brother Sanders to pose the question: "If people will go to hear quartets sing all night, why wouldn't people come sing all night?"; and

WHEREAS, delving further into this question and brainstorming over the course of multiple discussions, Brother Sanders and Brother Holland finally decided to launch an all-night congregational singing; and

WHEREAS, because Brother Sanders was a highly respected member of the Diana Church of Christ, he was granted permission to host the singing there; and

WHEREAS, working with no operating funds and spending a total of \$15 marketing the event, Brother Sanders and Brother Holland agreed to spend the necessary time preparing for and planning the Singing; and

WHEREAS, because of Brother Sanders's contagious enthusiasm for singing, hundreds of people showed up at the Diana Church of Christ to partake in the first all-night congregational singing in October of 1969; and

WHEREAS, because of the remarkable turnout, the people of the Diana Church of Christ worked in advance to accommodate the crowds for the second year, borrowing a tent to attach to the side of the church building and filling it with borrowed chairs; despite their expansion, however, more people arrived than were expected, and the audience surpassed the space available; and

WHEREAS, the following year, the church congregation borrowed an even larger tent to attach to their building; again, the number of people who participated in the Singing outnumbered the seats and the room available; and

WHEREAS, in preparation for the fourth singing, the congregation borrowed a stand-alone tent, which the crowd promptly filled and overflowed, singing late into the night in praise to the Lord; and

WHEREAS, realizing the importance of the participants being together in one place, the church body decided to set up accommodations to provide singers with ample space to gather; and

WHEREAS, when the possibility of buying a neighboring lot arose, the leaders of the Diana Singing announced their plans to the participants and, during one of the Singings, enough money was donated or pledged by singers to secure the purchase of the lot; and

WHEREAS, after the purchase of new property, a shed large enough to hold 1,500 people was erected in 1973, but it was quickly outgrown by the great number of people attending the annual event; in 1974, the "Diana Singing Shed" was enlarged in an effort to grow with the crowd; and

WHEREAS, a much anticipated annual event, the Diana Singing takes place on the first full weekends of June and September; the first night of the two-night event draws the larger crowd, usually 3,000 church members from Tennessee, neighboring states, and across the nation; and

WHEREAS, during both evenings, the session starts at 7:30, and, on Friday, the singing continues well past midnight, with some people lingering to sing until daybreak; the Saturday night session ends at 11:30; and

WHEREAS, in a culture driven by technology, the Diana Singing stands out as a reminder of simpler times, with the audience singing old favorites from hymnals; and

WHEREAS, during the last hour of each night, a select group of song leaders asks singers to come down to the front of the shed, arrange themselves by musical parts, and prepare to record the music; leaders then take turns directing, indicating the next selection of the song on a small erasable board; and

WHEREAS, an event that reminds participants of the holiness and goodness of God, the Diana Singing consists of the swelling of sound when the hymns begin, punctuated by silence between songs, interrupted only by the tone blown on the pitch pipe in preparation for the next hymn; and

WHEREAS, for many people, the hymns sung at the Diana Singing remind them of growing up, of sitting on their grandmother's lap during a church service, or of listening to their parents sing on a bright Sunday morning; and

WHEREAS, one avid participant, Deborah Miller, a member of the Tusculum Church in Nashville, said of the old songs, "The older I get, the more they mean to me. As a kid, I didn't really understand them, but now they kind of talk to my soul"; and

WHEREAS, the Diana Singing property now includes ten acres of camping facilities, complete with water, electricity, and shower houses; during the last Singing, the property housed fifty-eight RVs, allowing campers to come early and help with preparations, assisting with activities at the Singing, including a "Ham Shed" that serves county ham sandwiches and fried pies, a gift shop, a book stand, and a songbook museum; and

WHEREAS, in response to the constant growth of the Diana Singing and the larger-than-life worship event it has become, Brother Holland said, "We never dreamed that people would be coming here from literally all over the United States"; and

WHEREAS, the Diana Singing represents the best of Tennessee tradition, uniting people from across the United States to sing hymns together and to think back to a day when a

praise service consisted of the blending of voices without the aid of microphones or television screens, and it should be specially honored; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and recognize the founders, leaders, and participants of the Diana Singing, join with them in celebration of the event's impact on the citizens of this State and its fortieth anniversary, and extend to them our sincerest wishes for every success in all their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.